

SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND EEFORMEE 185

But the prejudiced, the purblind, and the foolish, the hundreds of so-called critics who had glanced at his novels but had never perused a line of the essays in which he enunciated his principles, responded by accusing him of a degraded partiality for filth, of wallowing in mire, because such was his favourite element. The sensation created by "L'Assommoir" had been great, that which attended the production of "Nana" was perhaps greater.

Much of the year 1878 was spent by Zola in making preparations for that book. Incredible as it may seem, his critics have actually reproached him for his previous ignorance of the "successful" Parisian courtesan. His knowledge of her had certainly been limited to her out-door life; like others he had seen her, elbowed her at the theatres, in the Bois, and at other places of public resort. That was all. He therefore applied to friends and acquaintances for information. Edmond de Goncourt, who had repeatedly dined at the table of La Paiiva¹ before she became the wife of Henckel von Donnersmarck, gave him a variety of information ; Ludovic Halevy initiated him into the *d&ini-*

¹ This woman had an extraordinary career. She was of German origin, her real name being Theresa Lachmann, but she was born in Russia, and first married a French tailor of Moscow, named Villoing. After eloping with. Here, the well-known pianist, she entered the Parisian, *demi-*

monde under the auspices of the notorious Esther Guimond. Finding herself in, difficulties she proceeded to London, fascinated and half-ruined a member of au. English, ducal house, returned to Paris, ruined several French nobles there, and ultimately married Viscount Armijo de Paiiva of the Portuguese Legation, whom she also ruined and who committed suicide. Though her beauty, which had been great, was then fading, she captivated Count Henckel von Donnersmarck, a connection of the Bismarck family, and he ended by marrying her. She lived in a magnificent mansion in the Champs Elyse"es adorned by Baudry, Cabauel, Gerfirne, and Cldsinger; and Girardin, Gautier, About, Ponsard, Augier, Houssaye, and Goncourt wore familiars of her drawing-room. She died in 1884 on her husband's estate in Silesia.